



FAMILY CAREGIVER ALLIANCE®
National Center on Caregiving

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July 21, 2004

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The Honorable Edward J. Markey
United States Representative
2108 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Programs

National Center on
Caregiving

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A nonprofit, tax-exempt
organization

The Honorable Christopher H. Smith
United States Representative
2373 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Markey and Smith,

On behalf of the National Center on Caregiving at Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA), I would like to offer my strong endorsement of the Ronald Reagan Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act of 2004 (H.R. 4595).

As you may know, FCA was founded 27 years ago to serve as a public voice for family and informal caregivers. FCA operates programs at local, state and national levels. In 2001 we launched the National Center on Caregiving to advance the development of high-quality, cost-effective policies and programs at the federal and state levels. We know intimately the challenges that families struggle with each and every day when caring for a loved one with a chronic or disabling condition.

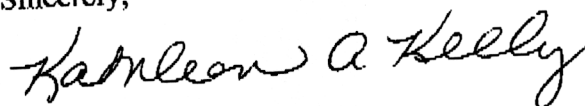
Every day in the U.S. family caregivers pull double or triple duty as employees, parents and caregivers. And with ongoing chronic conditions, like Alzheimer's disease, families struggle to cope emotionally, physically and financially for upwards of ten years, oftentimes with limited assistance and support. Increasing funding for the National Family Caregiver Support Program and enhancing respite options are essential in ensuring that key support services are available to help families remain in their caregiving role as long as appropriate. Further, enacting a tax credit that recognizes the astronomical costs associated with caregiving is an important first step. We should not penalize families for keeping loved ones at home – where they prefer – by forcing them to go it alone, when oftentimes a little financial assistance and some support services are all that is needed to prevent the far-more-expensive institutional alternative.

As our population ages, more and more families will face a range of difficult decisions as they confront long-term care for their parents, and for themselves. The unfortunate reality is that many will be forced to choose between the multiple competing demands of paying for the college expenses of their children, the home

care needs of a parent or relative and preparing for their own long-term care needs. Considering that many families already cope with the demands of caregiving by retiring early, reducing work hours, or taking unpaid leave, the struggle of how to make ends meet is all too real for many in our country. These families work hard every day, often at great personal sacrifice, and your legislation will make a real difference in their day-to-day lives.

Thank you for the time and attention that you have paid to this important issue. If we can provide additional assistance, please contact me or Lynn Friss Feinberg, Deputy Director. We look forward to working with you to ensure the passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,



Kathleen A. Kelly
Executive Director